

NINETY minutes of generosity and one moment of weakness jeopardised Wycombe Wanderers' Isthmian League championship challenge.

An opportunist equaliser by Dulwich centre forward Vic Heasman as play entered injury time meant Wycombe's second successive 1-1 draw in a week.

The result was almost a complete mockery as a reflection of events. But Wanderers, in red shirts due to a colour clash, have only themselves to blame. They should, and could, have been countless goals ahead well before the final whistle.

Such an oversight may yet prove the vital factor in determining whether the title goes to Loakes Park or Gander Green Lane.

For Sutton, now with only eight fixtures left to complete their programme, sailed on, thrashing Kingstonian 5-0 on Saturday. And that opens up a six point gap at the top, Wycombe having only two games in hand.

MIKE WHITESMAN reports

Dulwich Hamlet 1, Wycombe W. 1

So all may well depend on Wanderers' pending visit to Sutton. Present champions Enfield retain an important say in matters however. They are still to meet the Surrey contenders.

Saturday was Wycombe's second trip of the season to Champion Hill. In the first week of 1971, they had been leading 1-0 when fog closed in to force a postponement.

This time a blinding snowstorm threatened the match, and for over 30 minutes play was at half-pace in difficult conditions.

Wycombe's narrow 1-0 victory at Loakes Park last October, made as slow a start as their South London opponents. But, that hardly prevented them from hogging territorial and possessional advantage throughout.

Few teams have kept astride of the Wanderers on-field this

season, and Dulwich, despite their eager persistence, were not about to join that elite.

'Keeper Geoff Parson brought off a cat-like save to thwart Keith Searle in the sixth minute, and from then on, he and his defence were allowed only brief respite.

Not until the 40th minute, with the sun shining and snow traces fading from the pitch, did the Blues put a more realistic complexion on the scoreline.

Awarded a corner kick on the left flank, Wycombe marked up yet another goal from a set-piece, when Tony Horseman rolled his kick to the near post, and Johnny Hutchinson returned it.

The advancing Horseman this time lifted the ball over the "box" where John Delaney half-headed, half bundled it into the net.

Referee Robinson had no

hesitation in waving aside Dulwich appeals for what they claimed had been a foul on Parsons.

Mr. Robinson was quick to intervene when an incident in front of the players' tunnel between Alan Hawkins and Hutchinson threatened to get out of hand. He spoke to both men before resuming play.

Hamlet's defence was necessarily brave. But, nonetheless Wycombe, who should have begun the second half at least three goals up, must have lost count of their chances.

Finishing power, or rather the lack of it, let the visitors down badly. But they kept on coming, to the bewilderment of the Dulwich back row.

Pritchard and Hutchinson, then Ian Rundle and Bernie Bremer took it in turns to probe for a second goal.

Wanderers are still waiting though. Even a typically slick build-up involving Delaney and Powell, went astray after Searle had slipped round the defence to create an opening for himself in the 85th minute.

All the while, Wycombe seemed in little trouble, while Dulwich gamely kept faith and waited patiently for any slight slip in the Blues' covering, which was its normal, unyielding self.

That slip occurred, however—just as play edged into what was to be a large slice of injury time.

Ian Rundle, a steady deputy for Paul Fuschillo at right back, unhappily made a major error in judgement; John Swan gratefully pushed play across field, and with the visiting defence in trouble, Heasman slid in to beat Maskell to the ball and shoot home a shock equaliser.

Dulwich fans did everything in their power vocally to egg their players on to a second point. But Wanderers' desperate efforts to restore their lost advantage dominated injury time, which ran on for several minutes.

Parsons precariously tipped Searle's cross along the goal-face, and a defender conceded a corner. Twice the keeper had to juggle the ball from underneath his crossbar, then deal with a low shot before the danger passed once and for all.

Two strong penalty appeals by Wycombe were also turned down.

The lesson of the piece—make hay while the sun shines.

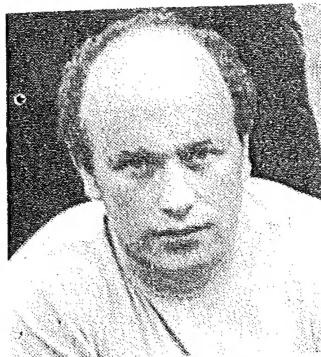
Ultimately, however, the price of tuition could be a second near miss at the title in two seasons.

The setback at Champion Hill is by no means the end. But, for Wanderers, it makes the title chase an even steeper uphill struggle from here on.

DULWICH HAMLET: G. Parsons, A. Hawkins, G. Garfield, D. Bailey, E. Allison, D. Barker, F. Stirling, J. Swan, V. Heasman, R. Major, E. Webb. Sub.: W. Wallace (not used).

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell, I. Rundle, K. Blunt, E. Powell, J. Delaney, V. Faulkner, B. Bremer, J. Hutchinson, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman. Sub.: B. Baker (not used).

Referee: Mr. B. K. Robinson. Half-time: 0-1. Goalscorers: Dulwich—Heasman (90); Wycombe—Delaney (40).



KEITH BLUNT



JOHN DELANEY